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ABSTRACT

The complexity of the global society and economy, and the resulting fracturing of social classes across the Midwest, the nation, and the world demand a significant expansion of the importance of human relations training courses for counselor education and for general teacher education. At the University of South Dakota at Vermillion the School of Education has committed to developing new goals for using new technologies and systems leadership theory for linking regional communities with a Central Plains Rural Human Resource and Economic Development Institute. The linkage of ideas, people, technologies, and resources focuses on providing midwesterners with the knowledge of the many-faceted and diverse global society in which the economic future is being forged. The potential for a leadership role for counselor educators, long committed to educating people about discrimination, is excellent in this model. As human relations training expands to address the economic and social contexts within which problem solving, conflict management, self-awareness, and social development occur, there will be ample opportunity for the renewal of professsional education curricula to occur on this base of knowledge. The conflicting national paradigms (U.S. supremacy versus U.S. global interdependence leadership) have kept the nation and the Midwest professional education community in turmoil for the past decade. One of these perspectives will have to dominate for progress to be made in the design of school and university curricula. (ABL)

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Beyond Empathy to Building a Plausible Economic Future

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Preface

It has been rare in research universities in the United States for administrators to have a background in the field of education. It is also unusual for deans of education or presidents to have a counseling background. In the School of Education at the University of South Dakota, the Dean of the School, since 1990, and the President, since 1989, both have doctoral backgrounds in counseling. The opportunity for counseling philosophy to be understood and nurtured by this administration has had a significant influence on the development of both institutional and collegiate directions in planning.

Additionally, three other top administrators of the University of South Dakota have education backgrounds, namely the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Vice President for Institutional Relations, and the Assistant to the President. While these administrators have not been deferential to education, there has been a supportive environment for professional education to develop new goals and to extend human and fiscal resources. Campus administration has been open to debate about the hopes of not only counselor education, but also other education division interests.

Because the University of South Dakota School of Education has benefitted from supportive top administration, an environment has been created to support the discussion of counseling philosophy and human relations training goals in the revision of School of Education planning directions. This paper will describe some of these directions and a primary project proposed for foundation funding. The relationship between human relations training precepts and these goals and projects is discussed.

The Education faculty has been appreciative of this opportunity to employ nineteen new faculty during the last two years. This paper explores a vision of a pluralistic society in which a school of education and its counselor education program have a strong importance for shaping human capital essential for the future of the Midwest and the nation.

Beyond Empathy to Building a Plausible Economic Future

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Hope Hard to Come By in Parts of the Midwest and the Nation

Farm closings, alcoholism, mental illness, and general lower expectations for a positive life are but some of the conditions in parts of South Dakota. These issues challenge South Dakota counselors and human service providers. What can counselor education and teacher education do to prepare graduates to best address these problems?

At the University of South Dakota (USD), the School of Education has an intense investment in the development of programs to produce educators and human service professionals who are in touch with the current midwestern and national social and economic problems. The human relations training (HRT) courses at USD and many other institutions have a long history of concern for minority issues and the sensitivity of the majority for the less fortunate.

This paper suggests, however, that the HRT component needs to be further developed and expanded in importance if university counselor and teacher educators are to continue to maintain a prominent place in the hopes of a pluralistic society. The paper describes how counseling and HRT philosophy have penetrated the goals and objectives of the USD School of Education for 1990-2000 to restructure the School's relationships in the Midwest have a strong base in counselor education perspectives.

The National and the South Dakota Despair: A Shrinking Economic Base for Expanding Human Capital

South Dakota is an example of a rural midwestern state with the notoriety of some of the lowest salaries in the nation, even though the state has a budget reserve instead of the deficits which plague many other states. The rest of the states in the nation have many pockets of social ills which put South Dakota in like company.

The nation continues to be "at risk"--in its economy, in its social institutions, and in its international policies. Even after almost ten years since the Nation at Risk (1983) was published to blast the education establishment as a primary source of the nation's ills, the nation appears yet to be struggling, particularly for the increasing numbers of the homeless, the working poor, the middle class, and, certainly, for the minorities for which the HRT programs have their primary focus.

The national risk continues to be inextricably related to the inadequate dominant social paradigm which has influenced the nation for many decades. For the past century this industrialized nation has sought to maintain preeminence through development of its own technical and natural resources, with little regard to its human resources. Until recently, there has been little concern about the interdependent nature of the world's economies, military powers, information systems, or natural resources. The concept of human capital development, as a significant aspect of social development, has emerged in the literature (Bright, Simula, & Smaby, 1984).

Education and Human Relations Training Caught between Dominant Paradigms

The nation, and the educational system, are currently caught between two conflicting social paradigms for the nation. The past dominant paradigm has been characterized by Pirages as integrating the purposes of the nation on asserting the nation's industrial and military supremacy. This paradigm of national preeminence requires social institutions, such as education, to seek and develop human resource persons who have the exceptional knowledge and skills to maintain the nation in a position of competitive dominance. The competing and emerging view of the United States is focused on the nation in an interdependent world systems paradigm (Pirages, 1978).

The continuing struggle of the national preeminence paradigm to be dominant has strongly and directly contributed to continuing criticisms of the schools, teacher education, counselor education, human relations training, and global education. This paradigm calls for return to traditional goals of academic excellence in the production of scientists and technologists who can help the nation to regain its position of world supremacy through industrialization. Advocates of this kind of change see direct linkages between the nation's economic and political preeminence and the productivity of the educational system.

In contrast, the interdependent world view requires a broadening of the curriculum to include knowledge and skills for understanding the nature of interdependent social and physical worlds. The latter approach requires a major revision in the capability of the educational system to educate adults and children to function as world citizens. This paradigm calls for more depth of study in both traditional (math, science, and humanities) areas, as well as in global studies.

The primary function of many human relations training and multicultural education programs has been focused on this education for understanding the diverse peoples of the world, if not at least the diverse peoples of the minorities of the United States. The challenge to reach these goals has not been, however, an easy one for many professors who teach HRT. The HRT approach to fighting

discrimination through analysis of prejudices has but modestly been incorporated in the core of teacher education. The impact of the last two decades of students of HRT appears yet to be seen in the people of the larger society.

Future Population Forecasts Prompt a Demand for International Understanding

Pirages has written that the next fifty years are likely to be the most revolutionary in the history of relations among nations. The last three centuries of rapid economic growth and expansion in industrialized nations will come to a close (Pirages, 1977). Population explosion alone will create a social revolution. In the year 8000 B. C., there were only about five million people in the world. For the next 10,000 years, population increased slowly, with about 500 million people by 1650 A. D. World population doubled about seven times during this entire ten thousand year period.

Then, enormous population growth was triggered, doubling the population in but 200 years by 1850. The population doubled again in just 80 years between 1850 and 1930. At present, four billion people populate the world, and the number will double again in less than forty years. By the year 2000, Pirages predicted that there will be more than six billion people in the world. This explosion of population, and the resulting consumption of natural resources, is unparalleled in human history (Erlich, 1977).

With the enormous increases in population there are aspects of the current social paradigm that experience stress. Willis Harman has labeled four of these stress dilemmas: (1) the growth dilemma--the need for continued growth but inability to live with the consequences; (2) the control dilemma--the need for more guidance over technological innovation but an aversion for centralized control; (3) the distribution dilemma--rich individuals and rich nations find it too costly to share wealth with the poor, but the rich realize that failure to do so can lead to disaster; (4) the work roles dilemma--society cannot provide enough legitimate roles to keep up with the expectations being instilled in the young. These dilemmas, according to Harman, are all linked to a scarcity of finding resources as the limits of the planet are approached by the growing population (Harman, 1977).

In this global context, what is the appropriate focus for the continuing developing of human relations training and multicultural education? This question has been of primary concern to the University of South Dakota School of Education as it develops its plans for the next decade.

With the unfortunate notoriety of having the lowest teachers' salaries in the nation, as well as the lowest average wages in the nation (from 1992 South Dakota Labor Market Information statistics), South Dakota is a fruitful place for depression. The major newspaper, the Sioux Falls Argus Leader, for South Dakota reported on September 7, 1992, the following disturbing data:

> Statistics from the State Labor Department show that the state has made some gains. Average wages for factory workers have increased from $3.14 an hour in 1972 to $8.83 an hour in 1992. But most of that gain was made between 1972 and 1982, with smaller growth in salaries in the last decade....
>
> But critics say despite the growth in salaries, the state continues to rank last for average pay to hourly workers.... "We're a state where people can work a forty hour week and even with two salaries if they are paid $5 (per hour) they cannot make and raise children," said Legia Spicer, director of the South Dakota Peace and Justice Center in Watertown.... "There is an emphasis on bringing more jobs into the state, but there is not sufficient concern that the wages being paid are low," she said.

A particularly poignant cartoon illustrating the damage of the State's having the lowest teachers' salaries in the nation appeared also on September 7, 1992 in the Argus Leader:

With popular sentiment such as this in the press, many teachers, as well as students, disbelieve that they will reap significant economic benefits based on the merits of their educational work.

Regardless of Race, Creed, or Color..., Do They Believe Us?

As much as we have reason to celebrate our human relations training and its pursuit of the development of social empathy, we now are facing a complex world in which the building of empathy is not seen by many students as enough to engender hope in their future. Many of our regional students face unemployment, family crisis, isolation, and depression.

As educators and counselors, we have offered education and schooling as a means for every person, regardless of circumstance of birth, to get ahead. Simply put, many of our students today seem to think we are **idealistic liars**. Many working class students see an absence of opportunity for them to ever achieve access to the benefits and responsibilities of society. The prospect of owning a home, a farm, or a business is hard to sell some students in South Dakota rural towns or reservations.

What do counselor educators and teacher educators tell their students when they say, "Why get an advanced degree when there won't be a job for me anyway?" What do our graduates say to their K-12 students who ask, "Why study hard when education won't get me ahead anyway?" What vision of the future makes sense to contemporary children and young adults whose parents are unemployed? What does a good university school or college of education teach its teachers to say about the issue? Is there a plausible economic future in which our students of all diversities may share?

Even a cursory review of trends in social class changes of the past two decades, let alone a review of the changes in ownership of American corporations, should cause U. S. citizens some pause to reflect on the future of the American dream which may have motivated many of us as we were growing up in the fifties and sixties. Is there an economic future for all of our students, our families, or our profession?

Educators as Keepers of the Keys of Hope

Counselor and teacher education have placed significant resources in the development of human relations training (HRT) programs to encourage graduates to empathize with people of diverse backgrounds. In a complex society in which many people are lacking hope of finding employment or acquiring enough savings to purchase a house, it is a challenge to teach sensitivity to global diversity or to promote the economic benefits of global understanding. It is within this context, however, that the University of South Dakota (USD) School of Education initiated in 1990 a new ten-year plan.

The faculty was intensely interested in two outwardly dichotomous purposes for human relations training as a foundation to graduate and undergraduate education and to the formulation of a vision of education for the next decade. The two

purposes are listed below:

(1) to educate a shrinking white majority to the **internal need of the United States to benefit from inclusion** of the talents and traditions of extant populations.

(2) to educate our own many-faceted culture with **external global societal diversity and a productive interdependent world vision.**

Clearly, there is currently a global society for many powerful people who are linked by technologies, resources, and global agenda. The challenge for schools of education, counselor education, and human relations training is to articulate their vision of a global society which assures inclusiveness in a plausible economic future. In South Dakota the vision must be plausible to the poorest group of our people, the large population of Native Americans, the rural poor trying to survive in eight of the nation's poorest counties.

> *Without a vision of hope, which is more powerful than the feeling of despair currently rampant in many parts of South Dakota, the nation, and the world, as educators we will not succeed in maintaining their roles as keepers of the keys of hope for society.*

How Can a Midwestern School of Education Contribute to a Hopeful Global View?

A school of education in a research university which serves several states in the Midwest is faced today with the challenge to produce a vision of a plausible economic future in a diverse global society. Graduates of the University of South Dakota must have knowledge and skill to encourage their students to productive and motivated lives. Can we in schools of education restructure our goals, programs, relationships, and technologies to have an impact on economic and social development? At the University of South Dakota, the answer to this question has been in the affirmative, based on a further development of human relations training, new linkages with business and the community, and with linkage technologies to confront the remoteness of many midwestern peoples.

A basic assumption of planning at USD in the School of Education has been that the skills and knowledge of human relations training (another title for global education) are significant to global understanding. For this foundation to be socially and economically important to students, the course needs today to expand its scope beyond relationships skills and examination of prejudices. The course at Vermillion, South Dakota, is taking on larger dimensions as the state, national, and global economic realities penetrate regional social issues.

While this paper was developed for discussion at the national meeting of the Association for Counselor Educators and Supervisors in San Antonio on September 18, 1992, it was also completed for discussion among the faculty at USD. The paper seeks to initiate some of the complex questions associated with the role of HRT and global education in the development of quality professional education for the next decades.

Albertus and Bright, the writers of this paper, have had many years of experience in counseling and teacher education. They sought to explore how human relations training at the University of South Dakota might be made more relevant to the developing of hope in the future for rural Midwest people who see themselves as remote from benefits of urban living.

In spite of thirty years of counselor educator HRT efforts to sensitize others to the importance of appreciating the rich tapestry of human differences, Albertus and Bright suggest that the demands of society in the late 1990's require a restructuring of HRT. These courses need to have a foundation global vision which considers the economic future for all students. The motivation of students to become sensitive to understanding cultural diversity is related to the extent that direct economic benefits can be perceived. A growing number of midwestern students need this orientation to understand the potential which sensitivity to global cultures has to economic well being of individuals in a global economy.

Albertus has taught an HRT graduate course for the past fifteen years in Iowa and South Dakota. He also had experience in the Upward Bound Program, which focused on the empowerment of disadvantaged youth. Bright, a dean of education for the past sixteen years in South Dakota, Minnesota, and Illinois, has also present extensive HRT experiences in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Illinois.

HRT at USD

Counseling at the University of South Dakota has had a long and distinguished history of contributing a philosophy of acceptance through human relations training courses and experiences. The USD faculty teaching HRT has taken pride in presenting a well-honed curriculum of readings, skill activities, and social experiences to encourage our regional population to develop empathy toward all peoples of the world. Unfortunately, the Midwest has not had a diversity of role models for students to know and understand. The HRT courses have relied heavily on ethical dilemma situations and self analysis of prejudices to create sensitivity to others.

In 1978 the USD counseling faculty assisted a six county western Iowa region in the development of what became the USD Human Relations Training Course. The Iowa Department of Education approved the course for teacher licensure in 1979.

Alvin D. Albertus was the instructor of the course.

The course was taught for the next eleven years to Iowa and Nebraska teachers. An on-campus course at USD was approved by the Iowa Department of Education in 1982. The course has had a tradition of helping teachers and other educators to become aware of their own biases and prejudices and how these affect the classroom.

The University of South Dakota has responded to the pressures of pluralism by helping students to become aware of the differences and similarities of various peoples. In the process of becoming aware of differences, the importance of being culturally different has also been emphasized. Teachers have been encouraged to consider that being "culturally different" is good. With this attitude that it is O.K. to be different, students do not need to change their culture (become assimilated) to be accepted. The HRT course has relied strongly on the ethical and moral reasons for people to reject prejudice and discrimination.

Facing the Justification for Empathy in Economic Terms

As the School of Education at the University of South Dakota (USD) began its introspection into its goals and knowledge base in 1991 and 1992, the faculty seriously reviewed the programs, including HRT, which had been designed to prepare its educators to serve the State. An analysis of the complexity of global living precipitated a discussion of the type of world for which the School's programs prepared graduates. It is not surprising that this dialogue turned frequently to a discussion of which courses promoted a vision of a future which promoted hope and motivated all faculty and students to invest in perpetual education. The HRT course was frequently a center of attention. Did the course go beyond teaching empathy to suggesting a plausible and pluralistic economic future?

It was determined that the past USD educator preparation program, in spite of the skills and attitudes taught in the HRT course, probably did not necessarily acquaint students with a global societal view, including a plausible economic future for all. Our current education paradigm has assumed that sensitivity to others is a self-evident positive value. While it may be, this value is not transparent in its translation to economic independence for many people who do not see themselves as linked to or interdependent with the global society or economy.

The USD School of Education has speculated that its programs, and particularly its approach to teaching diversity and empathy, need to be expanded in scope and importance. The impact of knowledge of interdependent social, economic, military, environmental, and other systems to the need for sensitivity to cultural differences can be approached from an economic development reality which may put hope back into the faces of the disadvantage and rural citizens of today. It has been with this

global view that the USD School of Education has renewed its directions and revalidated its reliance on HRT foundations.

Reflecting on the World as We Make Professional Decisions

The USD School of Education faculty selected a theme of "Reflective Decision Making" to attempt to integrate the many cognitive, affective, and interrelated aspects of the knowledge base of the programs of study in the School. It is noteworthy that the sensitivities basis to the HRT course at USD are implied by the following list of aspirations for this professional education faculty:

As Reflective Decision Makers in Education, We at USD Aspire to....

a. **accept** the world as more complex than simple, more interdependent than fractured, and more in need of synthesis than reductionism
b. **act** with courage in facing life's really difficult issues (such as death, poverty, disease, divorce, discrimination, drugs, abuse, and crime), while yet being subject to the influence of positive visions of a complex world
c. **see** the mutual worth of an expanding curriculum and the need to balance the importance of intellect and emotion
d. **demonstrate** energy, vitality, achievement, performance, and intellectual intensity, on one hand, but patience, tolerance, empathy, introspection, love, loyalty, and emotional honesty, on the other hand
e. **participate** actively in dialogues to design a new, hopeful, and developmental view of education and life for a pluralistic and interdependent world, in contrast to maintaining the status quo, or allowing a cynical or hopeless perspective
f. **appreciate** the importance of nonlinear, synthetic, abstract, and higher level thinking
g. **support** the importance of basic skills, linear thinking, accuracy in statement, and capability to link the abstract to the concrete
h. **promote** holistic perspectives on human beings in which readiness to learn and to contribute are perceived as related to human wellness, including a disciplined mind, a healthy spirit, a strong body, and active and networked social relationships
i. **relate** to a mainstream of human service educators and providers who as persons are more " many- faceted" than "unidimensional"
j. **rely** more on the importance of encouragement and high expectations in our relationships with others than on criticism or punishment
k. **perform** with vitality, openness, and initiative, which springs from a breadth of academic and life experiences

l. **face** decisions honestly, with a scientific method, informed intuition and tradition, and with the benefits of reflection on the many factors that relate to all decisions

m. **value** a broad and strong liberal education, emphasize the importance of professional conceptual theory and skills, analytical thinking and problem solving, and the importance of volition in teaching and learning

n. **search** for the right reasons to do the right things, reflecting as much on ethics as on outcomes

The contrasts in this perspective require a sensitivity to diversity which has been long a component of the HRT course. The diversity of intellectual, emotional, social, physical, spiritual, and political issues implied by this perspective require teaching and learning activities which promote thoughtful reflection, including both convergent and divergent thinking. There is a need in decision making to assure the mutual importance of theory, scientific findings, and human feelings and aspirations.

This approach to "Reflective Decision Making" in the School of Education is designed to produce distinctive graduates who are broadly and deeply educated to serve in many alternative settings and with diverse people. There is a pragmatic base to this philosophy, with a respect for John Dewey, but with a strong inclusion of contemporary existential and analytical thinking. The USD course in HRT has been taught for many years with commitment to many of the above values.

While the faculty has been pleased to aspire to these values, and while pride has been taken in the introspection and the acknowledgement philosophical roots in Dewey progressivism, this faculty has sought to design an education paradigm which assures young people that these values will lead to economic and social prosperity.

Economic and Global Goals for a Midwestern University Education School

The influence of counseling and the HRT course tradition has been felt in the development of the ten-year planning statement for the USD School of Education. The School selected four primary focuses of the School for 1990-2000. These focuses, derived in 1990-1992, are described on the following page, as **excerpted from the School Planning Statement:**

Primary Focuses of the USD School of Education

*A. **Rural Schools Advancement:** Keys to South Dakota Development*

The needs of South Dakota in the next decades will focus strongly on empowering rural citizens to share in the benefits and responsibilities of the larger society. A very significant challenge to education and educators in the State is to provide such a superior, cost effective, and efficient education system which will influence the following three macro-needs of the State:

1. ***Economic Development** in a State with Modest Industrial, Agricultural, Recreational, and Economic Resources;*

2. ***Social Development** in a State Noted for Its Homogeneity and Cohesiveness in Values;*

3. ***Population Expansion** in a State with Traditional Outmigration of Youth.*

Schools are essential to maintaining a free and democratic society in which free enterprise and social class mediation can occur, in which optimum human development and quality of life of societies seeking to contribute in an information society need schools which can produce citizens with the knowledge, skills, and values to participate successfully in a global economy.

The linkage between the quality of education in a society and its economic, social, or cultural levels of development is dependent on many factors, including the relevance of school curriculum to changing societal needs and the degree of energy, creativity, and funding provided for education to address individual and group developmental needs. While education's purposes are larger than preparing citizens for economic and vocational productivity, the pressures of global change require that these areas have high priority.

*B. **Education Development with a Global Focus***

At USD the faculty in Education is focusing intensely on process and curricula for transforming education to prepare educators to serve in an increasingly international world. As the State of South Dakota struggles to find its niche in the global economy, the School of Education accepts responsibility to study and promote educational reforms which address emerging global, national, and state goals.

C. Curriculum Change in the Schools and Teacher Education

Schooling, as a Constitutional State function, requires a curriculum which prepares students to develop the knowledge, skills, and values which prepare them and the State for productive service and successful lives. The impact of the present global economy is penetrating for the schools of the State, and thereby for the USD School of Education.

The current school curriculum focuses primarily on the knowledge of the Western world. This curriculum fails to prepare school children or adults with the knowledge and awareness of values to enhance their interactions with the people of the rest of the world. Educators prepared in South Dakota institutions have but a minimal introduction to knowledge and applications of technologies, or emerging research on teaching, learning, and organizational behaviors which are essential for creating organizational change and social development.

D. Interactive Technology Applications

For rural schools in a sparsely populated state to have exemplary educational opportunities, emerging technologies can offer significant advantages. The School of Education at The University of South Dakota can assist rural schools in their development of interdistrict organizational models to produce a sufficient body of computer/video teaching materials and software.

During the past twenty years the U.S. has had numerous projects to use educational television with "one-way" delivery to passive students. This approach extends the past educational paradigm and does not take advantage of current learning technologies which can offer multimedia learning experiences which can be controlled by the student viewer.

University education faculty now have the knowledge and skill to produce video-computer-assisted learning programs which can be essential in shifting the U.S. education paradigm away from the passive learner, teacher dominated approach current in most of education at every level. South Dakota public schools, supported by a rapidly developing USD School of Education, can apply new learning programs to transform the content and methods of teaching in the State.

Through a variety of current and emerging information technologies and through collaboration of many organizations with whom the School of Education will need to work, citizens and students in South Dakota can be fully-interactive participants in the global world, without regard to remoteness of location.

The influence of HRT and global sensitivity is self-evident in the above planning statement. The operational plans of the USD School of Education, although too involved for the scope of this paper, extend from these four focuses to chart a set of objectives aimed at creating a plausible and hopeful future for Midwestern citizens who will learn with USD Education graduates. The primary project which has emerged during 1992 as a result of the 1990 planning goal setting offers a direct means for linking education and economic futures development. It is this "Central Plains Progressive Strip" project which is planned to create this "plausible, economic future."

A Central Plains Rural Human Resource & Economic Development Model

The **Central Plains Progressive Strip** is a term used to describe the creation of a new organizational structure which links human resource development resources for addressing human capital and economic development.

The USD School of Education has proposed to seek private and public funds to create a research and development institute. The "Central Plains Rural Human Resource and Economic Development Model" was designed to provide professional and technical services, high technology instructional products, and telecommunications and fiber optic communications linkages in the rural Midwest. This Central Plains Institute (CPI) will focus on the synthesis of interactive media technologies, leadership research, and education-business partnerships.

Through consultation services, adult and student learning program products, telecommunications, and fiber optics, clusters of communities will be networked. School and business education and training programs will be linked to a Central Plains Institute electronic hub. The CPI will have the computer, video, instructional design, and human resources for using high technology to solve problems related to human capital and economic development issues.

The CPI will provide existing and new education and business groups with the resources to learn to use sophisticated video and computer resources for addressing the traditional remoteness of rural populations. The goal of the Central Plains Institute is to create understanding of the global society and economy. This understanding will be essential to the development of a hopeful vision of a pluralistic world in which rural Midwesterners can contribute, share, and benefit.

The CPI will provide direct human resource development through education and training. It will have programs and people to retrain the regional human resource pool, and the Institute is planned to become a magnet for new information age businesses and population immigration. Benefits for rural communities are expected to be in planned population increases, tax base development, and measurable enhancement in the quality of life of the Midwest rural environment.

Human Capital and a Plausible Economic Future

Human capital development is essential for economic development. This is particularly true in the sparsely populated rural Midwest. Education and training, both formal and informal, are the foundation of human capital development. Traditional school education programs and business training programs have not been linked to address regional economic development needs. People, ideas, technologies, and initiatives necessary for stimulating economic and cultural development can be linked and developed through emerging telecommunications technologies and through the application of leadership research.

Rural communities across the nation and the world have often seen themselves as isolated and disenfranchised from the benefits of urban development. Interdependent relationships among rural communities can now be created through high technologies. Rural people need to understand how to use, produce, and apply this technology for human capital and economic development. Educational and business leaders along the Central Plains Progressive Strip (Midwest communities along Interstate 29) are actively developing a regional research park or institute concept to use more fully the talents and resources of this region and to expand the human resources through population growth.

Operational Procedures

In the proposed Institute, Education and Business faculty at the University of South Dakota (USD) would make the most advanced educational and organizational development research available to key leaders in networked rural populations for redevelopment of the workforce. The multimedia approach and latest technologies will foster a "show me" rather than "tell me" approach to learning. Schools, businesses, corporations, and universities would focus on interdependent economic development goals, rather than compete for the same finite resources.

Schools have traditionally focused on individual student development, without overt goals to contribute human resources directly to development of the local and regional community; rural students frequently have moved to urban centers, creating a "brain drain" in rural parts of the world; individual small businesses frequently are poorly linked to each other or to the schools and universities. With this new mindset, interdependent goals can achieve economic development through human resource development without disruption of the fabric of the rural community. No longer will successful education and training programs in rural communities lead to export of its best talent to urban centers.

It is also important to point out that besides the obvious increase in knowledge that results from technological awareness and advances, learning programs can also be designed to help populations primarily homogenous in nature to better understand

diverse cultural values. A multicultural attitude is essential to continued population and economic growth, including highly talented people with diverse backgrounds. The interests and talents of diverse populations will be a constant consideration in the development of this project.

A major investment in the development of human capital is essential for continued U. S. economic advancement. Goals of business and education can be integrated to produce a highly developed and retrained rural work force with the talent, creativity, and stability to challenge other industrialized regions and emerging international information technology competitors.

The emergence of this conceptual model occurred, in part, due to the unique character of the people of the Central Plains Progressive Strip (linked communities of Sioux Falls, Sioux City, Yankton, Dakota Dunes, and Omaha). The educational and economic development leaders in this part of the Nation are aggressively seeking new and creative approaches to use more fully the talents and resources of this region. The plan seeks to build on the strong collaborative farm and small town values of the Midwest. These values include appreciation of work, dedication to quality, and desire to improve quality of life.

Leadership from University Education, Business, & Corporate Partners

The School of Education and the School of Business at the University of South Dakota (USD) and the Dakota Dunes Development Project (a major new community housing development around a golf course and country club) have interacted regularly to plan the model. The planning goal was to promote a new level of business and education interaction for achieving direct results in economic development through a comprehensive program to enhance regional human resources. Conceptual discussions have included Citibank Corporation, Apple Corporation, U. S. West Communications, a consortium of South Dakota school superintendents, and South Dakota educational leaders. These leaders perceive that with a more highly skilled and technical work force, the region can become a more progressive center for economic growth.

Central Plains Institute Objectives

The major objective of this project is to establish a Central Plains Rural Human Resource Development Institute at the University of South Dakota (USD). This institute is planned with the following "research park" objectives for developing products, providing services, and linking people:

a) to produce, demonstrate, disseminate, and research the highest quality interactive media learning programs for use in existing businesses and schools, and for new businesses establishing training for their employees;

b) to provide personnel and technologies to rural communities for better access to an information society;
c) to optimize interactive, learner-paced instruction through use of emerging video, fiber optic, and laser technologies;
d) to promote a new level of business and education interaction for achieving direct results in economic development through a comprehensive program to enhance regional human resources;
e) to enhance the regional human resource pool and to support development of an immigrant human resource base;
f) to serve as a replicable model for other regions of the country and the world.

Why the Midwest for Such a Project to Create a Plausible Economic Future?

The Midwest has had a long tradition of commitment to human capital development through the K-16 educational system. Demands of the information age for continuous, lifelong learning require a new level of energy, creativity, technology, and funding for improving the human capital development in the K-16 schools at the elementary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. A new awareness of society of the importance of formal and informal schooling will be necessary. Information age workers need critical thinking and complex knowledge and skills for increasing U. S. capital and international economic leadership.

The Institute model of human resource development focuses on restructuring and improving the K-16 school curriculum and delivery methods, while simultaneously building school and business partnerships to improve training for business. There is an obvious similarity in the challenge for school teachers to develop high quality, media-rich programs for children and in the challenge for industrial trainers to produce highly motivational and efficient media-rich programs for business training or retraining. To achieve this, the infrastructure must support the integration of technology into the learning and training environment.

The plan seeks to build on the strong work ethic and collaborative farm and small town values of the Midwest which include appreciation of work, dedication to quality, and desire to improve quality of life. Area leaders perceive that, with a more highly skilled and technical work force, our region can become a more progressive center for economic growth. The concept is to promote a regionalism which can become a magnet for new businesses and population expansion, with replicability to other rural settings of the world.

Personnel and Resources Needed

Highly talented people will be needed to lead the development of a new vision of the relationship of education and training to achieve the goals of this project. Education and training are key elements to human capital development, economic development, and

rural growth. An investment in facilities, personnel, and equipment for teaching information technology applications is necessary to deliver human resource development programs to rural people with significant commitment to home and family. Resources are needed for producing high technology instructional programs to more effectively teach our regional populations to perform optimally in a variety of career fields. Of a $24 million initiative, the amount of $7 million is needed during the first five-year period to develop and network production laboratories ($3 million), establish interactive technology and multimedia classrooms, learning stations, and seminar areas at the various sites ($2 million), and train the workforce in the use of such applications ($2 million). Linkage to multiple sites is planned for fostering collaboration in the use, sharing, and production of software and other multimedia applications. The new capability will also enable the training of those who will train others.

Personnel and Resources Available

The USD Schools of Education and Business have already made commitments critical to the success of this project. The Center for Interactive Technology in Education and Corporations (InTEC) has been established and its key personnel have received training in the use and development of multimedia applications on Apple and MS-DOS platforms. The six InTEC faculty members will also be responsible for the development of educational and training modules for transmission of information to interested parties in this project. The corporate partners have made commitments for promoting the research and developmental interests of the University, as well as providing the technical expertise in the planning and implementation of the project. School, business, and community leaders have recognized the importance of this project and have made commitments to support its efforts in terms of release for its faculty and staff.

Time Schedule

The time schedule for this project has been segmented into three phases. Phases 1 will be during the first year when the Institute is established, schools and businesses are recruited, key personnel are identified, and needs are determined for hardware, software, and networking/connectivity. Phase 2 will occur during the second year when two pilot sites will be established, linked to the Institute offices at USD, and receive training in interactive multimedia education.

Other schools and businesses will also be recruited during this time period for development as future sites. Phase 3 will begin with a regional conference for sharing information from the first two years of the project and will be repeated in subsequent years. Four additional sites will be established during the next three years to demonstrate the replicability of the model in other rural settings. During this entire period an advisory group representing education, business, and community interests will oversee the project.

Summary: HRT Concepts, Linkage Technologies and Human Capital for a Hopeful Future

The complexity of the global society and economy, and the resulting fracturing of social classes across the Midwest, the nation, and the world demand a significant expansion of the importance of human relations training courses for counselor education and for general teacher education. At the University of South Dakota at Vermillion, South Dakota, the School of Education of 125 faculty and staff have committed to developing new goals for using new technologies and systems leadership theory for linking regional communities and with a Central Plains Rural Human Resource and Economic Development Institute (shortened to CPI, Central Plains Institute). The linkage of ideas, people, technologies, and resources focuses on providing midwesterners with the knowledge of the many-faceted and diverse global society in which the economic future is being forged.

The potential for a leadership role for counselor educators, long committed to educating people about discrimination, is excellent in this model. As human relations training expands to address the economic and social contexts within which problem solving, conflict management, self-awareness, and social development occur, there will be ample opportunity for the renewal of professional education curricula to occur on this base of knowledge.

The conflicting national paradigms (U.S. supremacy vs. U.S. global interdependence leadership) have kept the nation and the midwest professional education community in turmoil for the past decade. One of these perspectives will have to dominate for progress to be made in the design of school and university curricula. The fight for dominance will be addressed through both political and academic channels as the decade of the 90's continues.

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